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From the Office of the Director of Health

Recreational Water Testing Begins

The week of May 23-30, 2005, is the first National Recreational Water Illness Prevention Week. Millions of Americans enjoy water activities such as swimming, fishing, boating and skiing each year.

Swallowing, breathing, or having contact with contaminated water in swimming pools, spas, rivers, streams and lakes may spread recreational water illnesses. This week the Springfield-Greene County Health Department will begin testing swimming holes in local rivers and streams for coliform bacteria.

Water in rivers, streams and lakes can contain harmful bacteria from human or animal waste and wastewater runoff. The most common recreational water illness is diarrhea caused by swallowing contaminated water, but other infections of the eye, ear, nose, and skin may also occur.

The most frequent recreational water, diarrhea-causing pathogens are *E. coli*, *Shigella*, *Giardia* and *Cryptosporidium*. Anyone having contact with recreational water is at risk for becoming ill, however children, pregnant women, the elderly and people with compromised immune systems are more likely to suffer a severe illness if infected.

To help protect your family from recreational water illnesses, follow these healthy swimming tips:

- ✓ Do not swim after heavy rains, or if the water is murky. Wastewater runoff is highest following a rain.
- ✓ Do not swim when you have diarrhea. You may spread bacteria and make other people sick.
- ✓ Do not swallow swimming water; and if possible avoid getting it in your mouth altogether.
- ✓ Practice good hygiene, bacteria from your hands could end up on your food.

When water is contaminated or conditions are uncertain, avoid full-body contact water activities such as swimming and diving.

The Health Department will test area swimming holes every week throughout the summer for *E. coli*. Test results will be available beginning May 27th on our website at <http://health.springfieldmogov.org> or by calling (417) 864-1658.

For more information, contact:

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